

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT AREA 14

2020 ANNUAL UPDATE

**Shellfish Sanitation Section
Environmental Affairs
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201**

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WEB ADDRESS
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SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT AREA 14 2020 ANNUAL UPDATE

[Data Through December 2019]



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2020 ANNUAL UPDATE
Shellfish Management Area 14

Data Inclusive Dates:
01/01/17 thru 12/31/19

Classification Change:
 X Yes No

Shoreline Survey Completed: Yes

(I)ncreased/(D)ecreased/(N)one:

Prior Report & Date: 2019 Annual Update

 I Approved
 N Conditionally Approved
 D Restricted
 N Prohibited

SUMMARY

For the 2020 Annual Update, water quality monitoring data for Shellfish Management Area (SFMA) 14 exhibited some improvements to the data reviewed for the 2019 report. Evaluation of the data collected at the monitoring stations indicated improvements in water quality at stations 14-13, 14-13A, 14-14, 14-18, and 14-21. The data revealed that all seventeen (17) shellfish water quality monitoring stations meet statistical criteria for the Approved classification. However, stations 14-13A will retain a Prohibited classification and 14-14 will retain a Restricted classification to act as shellfish boundary stations for the upcoming 2020-2021 shellfish harvesting season.

Rainfall and associated runoff will continue to influence water quality within portions of Area 14. Although improvements in overall water quality data during this survey review indicate an encouraging trend, for the past several years, there have been natural occurrences that have produced heavy rainfall. The above-average rainfall amounts are mostly due to a historic rain and flooding events that took place during Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Irma in October 2016, and September 2017, respectively. All these events had some effect on portions of Area 14 during those time periods.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The authority to regulate the harvest, sanitation, processing, and handling of shellfish is granted to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by Section 44-1-140 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended. The Department promulgated Regulation 61-47, which provides the rules used to implement this authority and outlines the requirements applied in regulating shellfish sanitation in the State. This regulation specifically addresses classification of shellfish harvesting areas and requires that all areas be examined by sanitary and bacteriological surveys and classified into an appropriate shellfish harvesting classification.

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish is used by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to evaluate state shellfish

sanitation programs. The NSSP Model Ordinance requires that a sanitary survey be in place for each growing area prior to its use as a source of shellfish for human consumption and prior to the area's classification as Approved, Conditionally Approved, Restricted, or Conditionally Restricted. Each sanitary survey shall be updated on an annual basis and accurately reflect changes which have occurred within the area. Requirement of the annual reevaluation include, at a minimum, field observations of pollution sources, an analysis of water quality data consisting of the past year's data in combination with appropriate previously collected data, review of reports and effluent samples from pollution sources, and review of performance standards for discharges impacting the growing area. A brief report documenting the findings shall also be provided.

The following criteria consistent with the NSSP Model Ordinance and S. C. Regulation 61-47 are used in establishing shellfish harvesting classifications:

Approved Area - Growing areas shall be classified approved when the sanitary survey concludes that fecal material, pathogenic microorganisms, and poisonous or deleterious substances are not present in concentrations that would render shellfish unsafe for human consumption. Approved classifications shall be determined upon a sanitary survey that includes water samples collected from stations in the designated area adjacent to actual or potential sources of pollution. For waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions, the median fecal coliform Most Probable Number (MPN) or the geometric mean MPN shall not exceed fourteen per one hundred milliliters, nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a fecal coliform MPN of forty-three per one hundred milliliters (per five tube decimal dilution). For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the geometric mean fecal coliform MPN shall not exceed fourteen per one hundred milliliters, nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of forty-three per one hundred milliliters (per five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be determined using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

Conditionally Approved Area - Growing areas may be classified conditionally approved when they are subject to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution. When such events are predictable, as in non-point source pollution from rainfall runoff or discharge of a major river, a management plan describing conditions under which harvesting will be allowed shall be adopted by the Department prior to classifying an area as conditionally approved. Where appropriate, the management plan for each conditionally approved area shall include performance standards for sources of controllable pollution (e.g., wastewater treatment and collection systems), evaluation of each source of pollution, and means of rapidly closing and subsequently reopening areas to shellfish harvesting. Memorandums of agreements shall be a part of these management plans where appropriate. Shellfish shall not be directly marketed from a conditionally approved area until conditions for an approved classification have been met for a period of time likely to ensure the shellfish are safe for consumption. Shellstock from conditionally approved areas that have been subjected to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution may be relayed to approved areas for purification or depurated through controlled purification operations only by special permit issued by the Department.

Restricted Area - Growing areas shall be classified restricted when sanitary survey data show a moderate degree of pollution or the presence of deleterious or poisonous substances to a degree that may cause the water quality to fluctuate unpredictably or at such a frequency that a conditionally approved classification is not feasible. Shellfish may be harvested from areas

classified as restricted only for the purposes of relaying or depuration and only by special permit issued by the Department and under Department supervision. The suitability of restricted areas for harvesting of shellstock for relay or depuration purposes may be determined through the use of comparison studies of background tissue samples with post-process tissue samples, as well as other process verification techniques deemed appropriate by the Department. For restricted areas to be utilized as a source of shellstock for depuration, or as source water for depuration, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN of restricted waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a MPN of two hundred and sixty per one hundred milliliters for a five-tube decimal dilution test. For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of two hundred and sixty (five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be obtained using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

Conditionally Restricted Area - Growing areas may be classified conditionally restricted when they are subject to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution. When such events are predictable, as in the malfunction of wastewater treatment facilities, non-point source pollution from rainfall runoff, discharge of a major river or potential discharges from dock or harbor facilities that may affect water quality, a management plan describing conditions under which harvesting will be allowed shall be prepared by the Department prior to classifying an area as conditionally restricted. Where appropriate, the management plan for each conditionally restricted area shall include performance standards for sources of controllable pollution, e.g., wastewater treatment and collection systems and an evaluation of each source of pollution, and description of the means of rapidly closing and subsequent reopening areas to shellfish harvesting. Memorandums of agreements shall be a part of these management plans where appropriate. Shellfish may be harvested from areas classified as conditionally restricted only for the purposes of relaying or depuration and only by permit issued by the Department and under Department supervision. For conditionally restricted areas to be utilized as a source of shellstock for depuration, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN of conditionally restricted waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a MPN of two hundred and sixty per one hundred milliliters for a five-tube decimal dilution test. For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of two hundred and sixty per one hundred milliliters (five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be obtained using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

Prohibited Area - Growing areas shall be classified prohibited if there is no current sanitary survey report or if the sanitary survey report or monitoring data show unsafe levels of fecal material, pathogenic microorganisms, or poisonous or deleterious substances in the growing area or otherwise indicate that such substances could potentially reach quantities that could render shellfish unfit or unsafe for human consumption.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Shellfish Management Area 14 consists of approximately 47,936 acres of shellfish growing area habitat located in Beaufort and Colleton counties. It consists of portions of the Coosaw River

and its tributaries including Huspah Creek, Whale Branch Creek, and the Bull, Combahee, and Ashepoo Rivers. The area west of the Combahee River is located in Beaufort County while areas to the east of the Combahee River are in Colleton County. The boundary of Area 14 was amended in the 1998 sanitary survey to include additional portions of Huspah Creek, with the subsequent boundary extending to S. C. Highway 17 and S. C. Highway 21.

The area's northern boundary includes S. C. Highway 17 at Huspah Creek and extends along an imaginary line crossing the lower portions of Bull River, Combahee River, and Rock Creek, to a point at the confluence of Mosquito Creek and the Ashepoo River. The eastern boundary begins at the confluence of the Ashepoo and Edisto Rivers at Fenwick Cut and ends at the point of Otter Island. The southern boundary line crosses St. Helena Sound to Morgan Island. The southern boundary then follows the shoreline of the Coosaw River and includes the areas that drain to the Coosaw River, such as Morgan Back Creek and a portion of McCalley Creek. The Southern boundary adjoins the Area 17 boundary at Whale Branch Creek. The western boundary runs parallel to Huspah Creek ending at S. C. Highway 17.

The shellfish industry in South Carolina is based on the harvest of the eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) and hard clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*). Areas in South Carolina designated for commercial harvest by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) include State Shellfish Grounds, Culture Permits, and Kings Grant areas.

Area 14 has five (5) Culture Permits (C): C125, C126, C129, C133, and C139. There are five (5) Mariculture (M) Permits in Area 14: M124, M126, M701F, M702F, and M704F. There are three (3) State Shellfish Grounds (SSGs): S065 (Morgan Island), S134 (Hutchinson Island) and S135 (Ashepoo River), on which commercial harvesting is allowed. There is one (1) Grant G126 (Chisolm Island.) The general public can also recreationally (R) harvest from R132 (Ashe Island). Recreational harvesting is allowed for clams and oysters on Recreational and State Grounds, subject to seasons determined by SCDNR.

Shellfish harvesting season in South Carolina typically extends from October 1 through May 31, although actual dates may vary. SCDNR has the authority to alter the shellfish-harvesting season for management purposes. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has the authority to prohibit shellfish harvesting when necessary to ensure that all shellfish harvested in South Carolina waters are safe for human consumption.

The harvesting classifications of Area 14 **prior** to this sanitary survey were as follows:

PROHIBITED

1. Campbell Creek, from its headwaters to its confluence with Whale Branch Creek.
2. Halfmoon Creek, from its headwaters to the split near the southern portion of Browns Island.

RESTRICTED

1. Whale Branch, from Station 14-22 eastward to Station 14-02, near the mouth of Campbell Creek.
2. Halfmoon Creek, from the split at the southern portion of Browns Island at station 14-13A, continuing to its confluence with Whale Branch at station 14-13, where there

- will be a semi-circle with a 1,000 ft. radius extending outward to the Whale Branch.
3. Huspah Creek, from its confluence with Whale Branch near Station 14-14, continuing northward past Station 14-18 terminating at the boundary line of SFMA 14.
 4. Ashepoo River, from sample station 14-19 continuing northward to station 14-21 and the boundary of SFMA 14.

CONDITIONALLY APPROVED

None

APPROVED

1. Whale Branch, from sample station 14-02 extending eastward to its confluence with the Coosaw River, excluding the portion that is Restricted associated with Sample Station 14-13.
2. Coosaw River extending eastward to its confluence with the St. Helena Sound, and ultimately to the east boundary of SFMA 14.
3. Broomsfield Creek, from its confluence with the Whale Branch to the boundary line of SFMA 14, located at the Brickyard Road North bridge.
4. Bull River (including its tributaries and adjacent marshlands), from sample station 14-04 continuing upstream to its confluence with Wimbee Creek and ending at the boundary line of SFMA 14.
5. Combahee River, from station 14-05 continuing upstream to the boundary line of SFMA 14, including a portion of the New Chehaw River.
6. The Ashepoo-Coosaw Cutoff, in its entirety.
7. Rock Creek, from its confluence with the St. Helena Sound extending upstream to the boundary line of SFMA 14.
8. Ashepoo River, from sample station 14-19, to its confluence with the St. Helena Sound.
9. Morgan Back Creek, in its entirety, including all tributaries and adjacent marshlands.

Station Addition/Re/Deactivation/Modification: None

POLLUTION SOURCE SURVEY

SURVEY PROCEDURES

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Environmental Affairs, Lowcountry – Beaufort Shellfish Sanitation Staff, routinely conducts shoreline survey activities in Area 14. Extensive visual examination of lands adjacent to the waters of Area 14 was conducted to determine type of activities, location of significant concentrations of domestic animals and other actual and potential sources of pollution entering shellfish growing waters.

POINT SOURCE POLLUTION

- A. Municipal and Community Waste Treatment Facilities** - James J. Davis Elementary School (SC0027481) is permitted to discharge treated wastewater to a ditch leading to Halfmoon Creek and Whale Branch Creek. The treatment plant is an activated sludge system with aeration, secondary clarification, filtration, chlorination, and de-chlorination. The Whale Branch Elementary and Middle schools are located adjacent to the S. C. Highway 21 Bridge on the southern shore of Whale Branch Creek are served by sewer.
- B. Industrial Waste** - Coastal Demolition and Construction, Inc. (SC0000914) was permitted to discharge into Campbell Creek. The facility is now closed. There is a pending enforcement action for proper close-out of the wastewater treatment plant.
- C. Marinas** – In 2007, prompted by the Department’s Office of Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) marina definition change, the Shellfish Sanitation Section incorporated the following definition. S.C. Regulation 61-47 Shellfish defines Marina as any of the following: (1) locked harbor facility; (2) any facility which provides fueling, pump-out, maintenance or repair services (regardless of length); (3) any facility which has effective docking space of greater than 250 linear feet or provides moorage for more than 10 boats; (4) any water area with a structure which is used for docking or otherwise mooring vessels and constructed to provide temporary or permanent docking space for more than ten boats, such as a mooring field; or (5) a dry stack facility.

Currently, there are no marinas located in Area 14.
- D. Radionuclides** - Sources of radionuclides have not been identified within Area 14, and radionuclide monitoring has not been conducted. No other sources of poisonous or deleterious substances have been identified within the area.

NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

- A. Urban and Suburban Stormwater Runoff** - Stormwater runoff may impact water quality by transporting fecal coliform bacteria (and other pollutants) from land to the shellfish growing area. Stormwater from roads, residences, and agricultural land is directed to the lowest point of elevation, which typically is the nearest creek or marsh. In addition, there are freshwater wetland areas, ditches, and impoundments that drain into tidal creeks.

Beaufort County enacted a Stormwater Management Utility which was established by county ordinance in 2001 and amended and enacted most recently in 2015. The Stormwater Utility is guided by a Comprehensive Master Plan and a Stormwater Management Utility Board which is dedicated to stormwater-related activities. The Comprehensive Master Plan identified nine (9) program elements that the utility must address. These elements are: Stormwater Control Regulations, Water Quality Controls for Existing Developments, Water Quality Monitoring, Annual Maintenance, Inventory of Secondary Stormwater Management Systems, Additional and On-going studies and analysis, Public Information, and Utility Administration.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is funded through the fees collected by Beaufort County. The Master Plan was designed to identify problem areas related to stormwater, and to recommend a plan to solve problems and better control the impacts on receiving waters in Beaufort County. The Stormwater Management Utility also partners with four Municipalities which include: The Town of Hilton Head Island IGA, Town of Bluffton IGA, Town of Port Royal IGA, and the City of Beaufort IGA. The above information was gathered from the Beaufort County Stormwater webpage which can be found at:

<https://www.beaufortcountysc.gov/stormwater/index.html>

The Beaufort County Manual for Stormwater Best Management Practices and Design Practices (BMP's) was developed in May 2010 and most recently revised in 2018. This manual has recommended policies and standards for stormwater pollution control for new developments, policies and standards for existing developments, and structural BMP design guidelines. This manual also has the Average Annual Fecal Coliform Runoff Load Calculations for various land uses with percent reductions required to meet fecal coliform loading targets. This manual not only requires pollutant removal, but also considers stormwater volume control to meet the County's antidegradation goals. Sec. 99-107 of the County Codes sets requirements for on-site stormwater systems: enforcement, methods, and inspections.

On June 4, 2014, SCDHEC designated Beaufort County as a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). MS4 is a component of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The notice of intent was submitted and the expected effective date was October 1, 2015 (Beaufort County Stormwater Utility, 2015).

Most land disturbing activities in South Carolina must comply with the Stormwater Management and Sediment Reduction Act of 1991. The final regulations, effective on June 28, 2002, establish the procedures and minimum standards for a statewide stormwater management program. For activities in the eight coastal counties, additional water quality requirements are imposed. For all projects, regardless of size, which are located within one-half mile of a receiving water body in the coastal zone, the criteria for permanent water quality ponds having a permanent pool is that they are designed to store the first inch of runoff from the entire site over a 24-hour period or storage of the first one inch of runoff from the built-upon portion of the property, whichever is greater. Storage may be accomplished through retention, detention, or infiltration systems, as appropriate for the specific site. In addition, for those projects that are located within 1000 feet of shellfish beds, the first one and one-half inches of runoff from the built-upon portion of the property must be retained on site. Since 1992, these regulations have been applied to the development of residential subdivisions, golf courses, and business areas.

- B. Agricultural Runoff** - Area 14 has some potential for agricultural nonpoint source pollution. During the shoreline survey, small herds of cattle and horses were located adjacent to Bull River and Huspah Creek. There are also small agricultural operations located in the eastern portion of Area 14 for the purpose of hunting.
- C. Individual Sewage Treatment and Disposal (ISTD) Systems** - Currently, most homes and businesses adjacent to Area 14 utilize ISTDS for wastewater disposal, as opposed to central treatment systems. Central treatment systems have less potential to impact shellfish growing

waters than ISTD systems, although central treatment system malfunctions can occasionally result in spills of untreated wastewater to the environment.

New home development continues in Bull Point Plantation and a residential development adjacent to the Huspah Creek. Wastewater is treated by individual aerobic treatment units (ATU). Coosaw Point is a 368-acre development adjacent to Coosaw River. Sewer will be provided to commercial buildings while most of the homes will utilize an ISTDS.

- D. Wildlife and Domestic Animals** - This area supports populations of white-tailed deer, raccoons, wading birds, migratory waterfowl, and other wildlife, which may contribute to fecal coliform levels in some areas. Domestic animals present in the area include dogs, cats, horses, and goats. A commercial monkey farm is located on Morgan Island. Monkeys roam the island until being captured and sold. Additionally, there are several impoundments in the upper reaches of Huspah Creek and along the Combahee, Chehaw, and Ashepoo Rivers that are utilized for waterfowl population management.
- E. Boat Traffic** - The Coosaw River provides access to St. Helena Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) is located in the Coosaw River between the Ashepoo-Coosaw Cutoff (near Combahee River) and Brickyard Creek. Tugboats, barges, commercial, and recreational vessels frequently utilize this North/South route.
- F. Hydrologic and Habitat Modification** - Hydrographic and habitat modification in estuarine areas requires both State and Federal approval. Portions of the AIWW require maintenance dredging. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers utilizes designated tracts of land adjacent to the AIWW as dredge spoil sites.

NATURALLY OCCURRING PATHOGENS

- A. Marine Biotoxins** - Bivalve shellfish contamination from marine biotoxins has not been shown to be a human health concern within Area 14. During the winter and spring of 1988, South Carolina experienced an occurrence of "Red Tide", specifically *Ptychodiscus brevis* (*K. brevis*), which affected water quality in other coastal areas of the state. There have been no documented reoccurrences of this organism at levels requiring emergency response in South Carolina waters subsequent to the 1988 event. Due to the vast media coverage of events related to *Pfiesteria piscicida*, the Department participates in a State Task Group on Toxic Algae and operates a toxic algae emergency response team.
- B. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*** – Because State water temperatures exceed 81 degrees Fahrenheit (F) during June through September, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (Vp) management controls must be implemented during these months. Management controls for permitted Aquaculture facilities are specifically addressed in R.61-47. The season for wild-stock harvest is currently closed from May 16 through September 30. The Department is currently opposed to issuance of special wild-stock harvest permits to Certified Shippers during the closed season. Special permit conditions for maricultured triploid oysters during the vibrio control months must include current R.61-47 and NSSP temperature control requirements to be included in the Certified Shipper's HACCP plan.

HYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Area 14 is part of the St. Helena Sound estuary which is a drowned river valley/bar-built system containing numerous marsh islands and tidal creeks. It is among the largest of the South Atlantic estuaries. The average depth of the estuary is approximately 12 feet at mid-tide level. Extensive shallow areas and numerous tidal flats exist within the estuary. The AIWW (12 feet at MLW) is the only maintained navigational channel (NOAA, 1994).

In Area 14, the Ashepoo River and Salkehatchie/Combahee Rivers are the main sources of the freshwater inflow. A river gauging station (USGS 02175500) is located on the Salkehatchie River near Miley, SC. A review of the data from this site shows little to no influence of freshwater from the Salkehatchie River on salinities. Localized rainfall appears to be more of a factor at the Ashepoo River, Combahee River, and Huspah Creek areas. River flow data may be found at the following USGS site: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/sc/nwis/current/?type=flow>.

At the eastern boundary of Area 14, the South Edisto River originates in the midlands of South Carolina and flows approximately 140 miles through the piedmont and coastal plain until it enters the Atlantic Ocean at Edisto Beach. It is the St. Helena Sound estuary's major freshwater source. The river discharges an annual mean of 2,457 cubic feet per second, based on data collected at the USGS gauging station (USGS 02175000) located at river mile 59.9 (at the Highway 61 bridge in Dorchester County). There is significant impact from freshwater inflow, in the form of low salinities and high fecal coliform concentrations, to stations in the South Edisto River, particularly in the winter and spring. There is some exchange with Area 13 through the Intracoastal Waterway at Fenwick Cut, which connects the South Edisto and Ashepoo Rivers. The closest sampling station in Area 14 (14-20) does not appear to be influenced by the South Edisto River.

The tides in Area 14 are semidiurnal, consisting of two low and high tides each lunar day. Mean tidal range is 5.9 feet during normal tides and 6.9 feet during spring tides. The greatest tidal ranges of the year typically occur around full moon during the months of September through December. There is considerable variation in the normal tide range due to the prevailing strength and direction of winds.

In 2017, the collection of rainfall data has been improved for a more consistent, accurate, and reliable data set that can be accessed directly from a shellfish staff member's computer or phone. With assistance from the National Weather Service's, Southeastern River Forecast Center, the development of the South Carolina Shellfish Rainfall Program was introduced and utilized. This new technology provides shellfish program staff with real-time daily updates for rainfall accumulation in each of the South Carolina shellfish growing management areas, as well as providing critical triggers that alert staff to when rainfall thresholds for closures are exceeded.

Mean annual rainfall is normally 49.78 inches, with August being the wettest month. The yearly rainfall amount was 47.19 inches for 2019. This is below the 30-year mean rainfall totals for this area (NOAA Climatological Data Center). Normally, approximately 40% of the annual rainfall falls in the three-month period from June to August. Weather patterns during this time period are often characterized by thunderstorms and thundershower activity of short duration. In

addition, these three months also have the highest numbers of days with rainfall greater than 1.00". The months of December through March historically have the greatest number of days with rainfall exceeding 0.10" and 0.50". Rainfall events during these months are typically of a longer duration.

Prevailing wind direction during January through February is generally from the west to northwest with an average speed of 8-12 MPH. During the months of March through August, wind direction is typically a southerly component at an average speed of 7-10 MPH and September through December normally maintains a north-north easterly wind direction with an average speed of 6-8 (NOAA).

WATER QUALITY STUDIES

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

The Department utilizes a systematic random sampling (SRS) strategy within Area 14 in lieu of sampling under adverse pollution conditions. In order to comply with NSSP guidelines, a minimum of thirty samples are required to be collected and analyzed from each station during the review period. Sampling dates are computer generated prior to the beginning of each calendar year thereby insuring random selection with respect to tidal stage and weather. Day of week selection criteria is limited to Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays due to shipping requirements and laboratory manpower constraints. Sample schedules are rarely altered.

During July 1998, an updated data analysis procedure was formalized. Samples utilized for classification purposes are limited to those samples collected in accordance with the SRS for a 36-month period beginning January 1 and ending December 31. This allows for a maximum of 36 samples per station, yet provides a six-sample "cushion" (above the NSSP required 30 minimum) for broken samples, lab error, breakdowns, etc. This also allows each annual report to meet the NSSP Triennial Review sampling criteria.

During the period 01/01/17 through 12/31/19, five hundred seventy-eight (578) surface water samples (<1.0 ft. deep) were collected at the seventeen (17) currently active Area 14 monitoring stations for bacteriological analyses. These samples were utilized for classification purposes in accordance with the Department's systematic random sampling plan. Samples were collected in 120 ml amber glass bottles, immediately placed on ice and transported to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Environmental Affairs, Lowcountry – Beaufort laboratory in Burton, South Carolina. An additional 120 ml water sample was included with each shipment as a temperature control. Upon receipt at the laboratory, sample sets that exceeded a 30-hour holding time or contained a temperature control >10 degrees Celsius (C) were discarded. Samples collected after September 1, 1986 have been analyzed using the five-tube/three dilution modified A-1 method described by Nuefeld (1985).

Surface water temperatures were measured utilizing hand-held, laboratory-quality calibrated centigrade thermometers. Salinity measurements were measured in the laboratory using automatic temperature compensated refractometers. Additional field data include ambient air temperature, wind direction, tidal stage and date and time of sampling. Tidal stages were determined using the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2018 Tides and Currents Predictions website located at http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/curr_pred.html.

MONITORING RESULTS

All monitoring stations within Shellfish Management Area (SFMA) 14 meet the fecal coliform indicator organism criteria for an Approved classification geometric mean value of 14 MPN and estimated 90th percentile value of 43 MPN. A fecal coliform bacteriological data summary is included as Table # 2.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rainfall totals since 2016 have all exceeded the totals from the previous five (5) years. Hurricanes Matthew and Irma took their tolls in October of 2016 and September of 2017, respectively, and impacted the area very similarly. Rainfall/stormwater runoff will continue to be a major factor in the water quality of the receiving waters of this shellfish management area.

During this review period several monitoring stations have shown improvements in water quality bacteriological data. All sample stations within Shellfish Management Area (SFMA) 14 now meet an Approved classification. However, stations 14-13A will retain a Prohibited classification and station 14-14 will retain a Restricted classification to act as shellfish boundary stations for the upcoming 2020-2021 shellfish harvesting season. Station 14-18 will also be classified as Restricted as it is within the boundary of station 14-14.

It is recommended that the Restricted classification will now include portions of Huspah Creek, from station 14-14 through station 14-18, Huspah Creek at Bull Point – Whale Branch POG and from station 14-13A from Halfmoon Creek to the southern portion of Browns Island. The Approved classification is now recommended in the Ashepoo River from sample station 14-19 to 14-21 to the boundary line of SFMA 14 and a portion of Halfmoon Creek at station 14-13 to 14-13A.

Sewage overflows are infrequent and will continue to be managed in accordance with National Shellfish Sanitation Program emergency closure guidelines.

During the harvest season, all Approved portions of the estuary should continue to be placed under a precautionary closure upon issuance of an official National Weather Service Hurricane Warning or upon receipt of four or more inches of rainfall within twenty-four hours, as recorded by the National Weather Service, Southeastern River Forecast Center.

Based upon the findings of this Annual Update, the following classification is recommended:

PROHIBITED

1. Campbell Creek, from its headwaters to its confluence with Whale Branch Creek.
2. Halfmoon Creek, from its headwaters to the split near the southern portion of Browns Island.

RESTRICTED

1. Halfmoon Creek, from the split at the southern portion of Browns Island at Station 14-13A.

2. Huspah Creek, from its confluence with Whale Branch near Station 14-14, continuing northward past Station 14-18 terminating at the boundary line of SFMA 14.

CONDITIONALLY APPROVED

None

APPROVED

1. Whale Branch, from sample station 14-02 extending eastward to its confluence with the Coosaw River, excluding the portion that is Prohibited associated with Sample Station 14-13A.
2. Coosaw River extending eastward to its confluence with the St. Helena Sound, and ultimately to the east boundary of SFMA 14.
3. Broomsfield Creek, from its confluence with Whale Branch to the boundary line of SFMA 14, located at the Brickyard Road North bridge.
4. Bull River (including its tributaries and adjacent marshlands), from sample station 14-04 continuing upstream to its confluence with Wimbee Creek and ending at the boundary line of SFMA 14.
5. Combahee River, from station 14-05 continuing upstream to the boundary line of SFMA 14, including a portion of the New Chehaw River.
6. The Ashepoo-Coosaw Cutoff, in its entirety.
7. Rock Creek, from its confluence with the St. Helena Sound extending upstream to the boundary line of SFMA 14.
8. Ashepoo River, including Station 14-19 to Station 14-21 to the boundary line of SFMA 14.
9. Morgan Back Creek, in its entirety, including all tributaries and adjacent marshlands.
10. Whale Branch, from Station 14-22 eastward to Station 14-02, near the mouth of Campbell Creek.

Station Addition/Re/Deactivation/Modification: None

Analysis of sampling data for Area 14 demonstrates the probability of a significant impact from rainfall exceeding 4.00" in a 24-hour period. Therefore, a precautionary closure of Area 14 will be implemented following rainfall events of greater than 4.00" in a 24-hour period, as measured by the National Weather Service, Southeastern River Forecast Center. This methodology is associated with the concept of the Probable Maximum Precipitation (PMP). PMP estimates for the coastal United States have been published in a series of hydro-meteorological reports (HMRs) by the National Weather Service (National Weather Service). PMP estimates for South Carolina's growing areas are derived from HMRs 51, 52, and 53 (National Research Council, 1985).

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- National Weather Service. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Precipitation Frequency Atlas of the Western US: NOAA Atlas II*. Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office - Washington DC.
- Nuefeld, N. 1985. "Procedures for the Bacteriological Examination of Seawater and Shellfish". In: A.E. Greenberg and D.A. Hunt (eds.) *Laboratory Procedures for the Examination of Seawater and Shellfish, Fifth Edition*. American Public Health Association, Washington, D.C. p. 37-63.

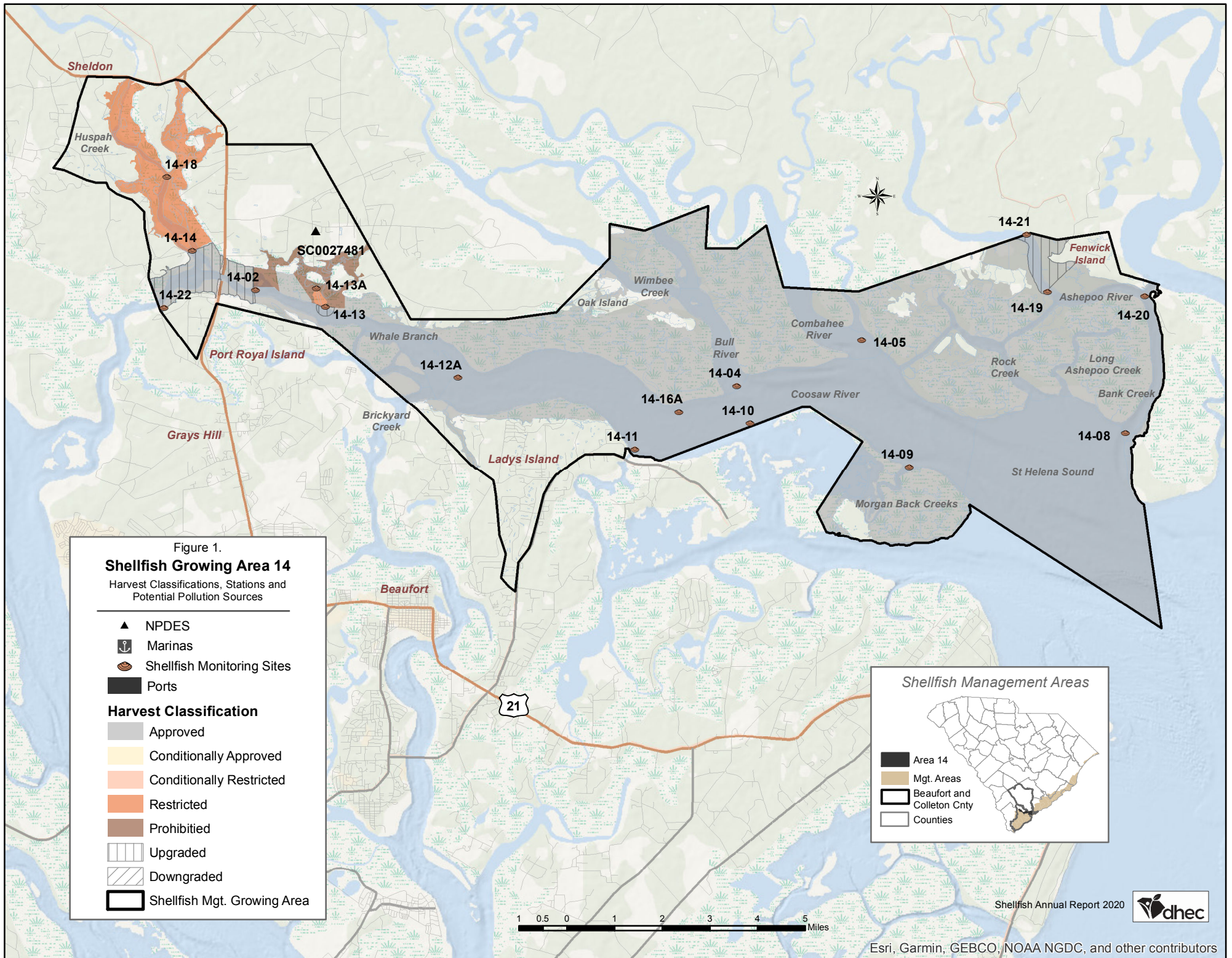


TABLE # 1
Shellfish Management Area 14
WATER QUALITY SAMPLING STATIONS DESCRIPTION

<u>Station</u>	<u>Description</u>
14-02	Campbell Creek at Whale Branch
14-04... ..	Bull River Inlet and Coosaw River
14-05... ..	Combahee River Inlet and Coosaw River
14-08... ..	Ashepoo River at St. Helena Sound - Black Can Buoy
14-09... ..	St. Helena Sound at Morgan Back Creek
14-10... ..	Parrot Creek and Coosaw River, Marker #1
14-11... ..	Sam's Point and Coosaw River
14-12A.	Confluence of Coosaw River and Whale Branch
14-13... ..	Halfmoon Creek at Whale Branch
14-13A	First split on Halfmoon Creek on the southern side of Browns Island
14-14... ..	Huspah Creek at Railroad Trestle
14-16A	2000 Feet Southeast of Mouth of Fish Creek
14-18... ..	Huspah Creek at Bull Point - Whale Branch POG
14-19... ..	Ashepoo River POG
14-20	Cut between the South Edisto River and the Ashepoo River
14-21	Confluence of Mosquito Creek and Ashepoo River
14-22	Eastside of SS RR Swing Bridge on Whale Branch

(Total Active - 17)

TABLE #2

**Shellfish Management Area 14
Fecal Coliform Bacteriological Data Summary
From Shellfish Water Quality Sampling Stations Between**

January 01, 2017 and December 31, 2019

Station #	02	04	05	08	09	10	11	12A	13	13A	14
Samples	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Geometric Mean	5	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	7	8	8
90th percentile	16	3	7	9	15	4	10	6	36	36	29
Water Quality	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Classification	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	P	R

Station #	16A	18	19	20	21	22
Samples	34	34	34	34	34	34
Geometric Mean	2	9	11	6	17	6
90th percentile	3	37	33	19	39	19
Water Quality	A	A	A	A	A	A
Classification	A	R	A	A	A	A

A - Approved **CA** - Conditionally Approved **R** - Restricted
RND - Restricted/No Depuration **P** - Prohibited

TABLE #3 Fecal Coliform Historical Trend Sheet Area 14 Stations 90 th ile Values for Annual Updates Related to Rainfall											
Station #	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
14-02	16	27	28	31	33	57	46	59	49	51	20
14-04	3	4	6	6	5	3	3	3	5	5	5
14-05	7	7	8	6	7	5	6	5	8	9	8
14-08	9	12	17	15	15	11	8	5	6	6	5
14-09	15	13	14	13	9	11	9	7	3	3	4
14-10	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	6	7
14-11	10	14	16	23	20	18	11	10	9	6	5
14-12A	6	8	8	6	4	4	4	12	13	15	5
14-13	36	52	54	38	36	41	32	29	25	31	14
14-13A	36	46	54	55	56	56	68	65	ND	ND	ND
14-14	29	53	54	50	46	41	42	66	68	72	23
14-16A	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	7	7	7
14-18	37	74	99	94	75	53	52	76	87	95	47
14-19	33	30	31	27	29	29	26	36	37	49	34
14-20	19	18	22	19	20	16	14	16	15	17	14
14-21	39	51	60	59	53	41	28	26	28	46	46
14-22	19	38	43	38	32	26	24	27	31	50	25
Annual Rainfall (inches)	47.19	47.89	52.03	51.15	48.14	44.35	37.56	30.02	28.22	35.96	41.80
ND = No Data Red = Impaired Water Quality											

TABLE #4

WATER QUALITY SAMPLING STATION DATA

Shellfish Management Area 14

Detailed data for each shellfish monitoring station listed in this report's "Fecal Coliform Bacteriological Data Summary Table" and in other shellfish reports can be obtained by writing South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control – Freedom of Information Office at the address below.

Freedom of Information
SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Any explanation or clarity needed on the report's content can be obtained by contacting the preparer(s), and/or reviewer(s) listed on the cover page.

TABLE #5

RAINFALL DATA

Shellfish Management Area 14

Source:

2017 – 2019 Data

National Weather Service - Southeastern River Forecast Center

Location: Beaufort, South Carolina

2017 Annual Rainfall Summary
Source: National Weather Service - Southeastern River Forecast Center
Location: Beaufort, South Carolina

2017	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	0.08						1.10		0.31			
2	0.02		0.09		1.54	0.12			1.13			
3	0.36		0.04			0.05	0.32	2.45				
4	0.04	0.05		0.75			1.36	0.40				
5					0.40	0.03		1.29	0.03			
6				2.07	0.01	0.50		0.06				
7	0.80					1.29			0.09	0.07		0.27
8	0.01	0.21				0.75	0.18	0.24				0.78
9		0.01					0.36	0.11		0.30	0.04	0.95
10							0.05	1.06	0.04	0.75	0.42	
11							0.31	0.28	0.84			
12		ND					0.03	ND	*5.70			
13					0.09			0.45				
14			0.47		0.42							
15								0.13				
16		0.17						ND				
17							0.94	ND		0.29		
18							0.62	ND				
19				0.02			0.01	ND				
20				0.20		0.02	0.34	ND				
21	0.01					0.49	0.02	0.02				0.09
22	1.70		0.08		0.17	0.30		ND	0.02		0.42	
23	1.65	0.03			2.58	0.06			0.04	0.86		
24	0.05			0.05	1.87			0.01		0.44	0.60	
25				0.17	0.60	0.32	0.72	1.59				0.03
26						0.41	0.10	0.15				
27							0.33	0.03				
28		0.24						0.09				0.02
29			0.05				0.08	0.04				0.09
30						0.01	0.27		0.21			
31			0.21									
Total	4.72	0.71	0.94	3.26	7.68	4.35	7.14	8.40	8.41	2.71	1.48	2.23
*Days highlighted indicate 4 or more inches of rain in a 24 hour period. Blank fields indicate no rainfall.												
* Sample dates are indicated in blue.						ND = No Data			ANNUAL RAINFALL		52.03	

2018 Annual Rainfall Summary
Source: National Weather Service - Southeastern River Forecast Center
Location: Beaufort, South Carolina

2018	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1			0.02			0.08	0.07	0.21				
2			0.07					0.13		0.10	0.01	1.00
3						0.74		0.85	0.26	0.01	0.01	2.62
4	0.72						0.18	0.73	0.14			0.01
5		0.49		0.01			0.08	0.24			1.04	
6							0.11		0.06		0.30	
7			0.08				0.02	0.09	0.01		0.04	
8		0.34		0.44			1.16		0.30	0.43	0.31	
9				0.05		0.74		0.01	0.05	0.37		0.80
10		0.54				0.34		0.02		1.69	0.41	0.61
11	0.01			0.03						0.17		
12	0.03	0.08	0.22						0.02			
13	0.47	0.02	0.20			0.42	0.02	0.04	0.11		0.76	
14						0.31	0.88	0.01			0.84	1.37
15						0.12	0.02	0.02			0.40	1.32
16				0.95	0.08			0.09	0.18			0.02
17					0.16		0.58	0.02				
18			0.07		0.08		0.97	0.02				
19			0.19		0.23		0.42	0.20			0.03	
20			0.46		0.01		1.20	0.64				0.04
21			0.21		0.06		0.86		0.07	0.04		0.37
22					0.02			0.04				0.01
23	0.16			0.32	0.20		0.04		0.01			
24				1.95	0.02	0.16	0.62		0.08		0.33	
25			0.04		0.41	0.12	0.38					
26		0.05	0.03		0.01	0.46	0.15	0.46		0.08	0.01	
27					0.01		0.18	0.20	0.03	0.11	0.16	
28					1.38	0.06	0.22	0.09	0.06			0.52
29	0.64				0.11		0.09	0.03				0.41
30							0.24		0.68			0.02
31			0.16		0.64		0.39					0.02
Total	2.03	1.52	1.75	3.75	3.42	3.55	8.88	4.14	2.06	3.00	4.65	9.14
*Days highlighted indicate 4 or more inches of rain in a 24 hour period. Blank fields indicate no rainfall.												
* Sample dates are indicated in blue.						ND = No Data			ANNUAL RAINFALL		47.89	

2019 Annual Rainfall Summary
Source: NOAA Southeast River Forecasting Center
Location: Beaufort, South Carolina

2019	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1			0.02	0.01		0.24			0.18		0.15	
2			0.05	0.66			0.06		0.11			0.21
3				0.13	0.04		0.04	0.28	0.53			
4	0.01	0.07	0.63		0.08		0.04	0.26				
5	0.38		0.21	0.07	0.13	2.55	0.19	0.32	2.45	0.10	0.02	
6			0.03	0.10	0.03	0.39	1.09	0.11	0.69	0.05	0.04	
7				0.07		0.70						
8				0.25		0.85	0.03	0.01		0.09	0.35	
9				0.04	0.02	0.56						
10				1.10	0.15	1.28	0.21		0.02			
11				0.22		0.08	0.24	0.04	0.01			
12		0.03	0.03	0.02		2.25		0.23				
13		0.02		0.04	0.94	1.76					0.20	0.02
14	0.05				0.01		0.08	0.19		0.09		1.41
15								0.92	0.06		0.54	
16		0.05	0.01					0.12	0.03	2.17	0.60	
17		0.05					0.06	0.33			0.70	
18	0.04					0.01		1.08	0.25			0.36
19	0.01	0.01				0.08						
20	0.76	0.04		0.32		0.01				2.44		
21		0.22				0.09		0.01				
22						0.14						
23						0.87		0.11				2.49
24	0.80						1.63				0.08	2.08
25	0.05	0.04										
26			0.05									
27		0.01								0.04		
28		0.01								0.10		
29												0.02
30	0.04					0.03				0.14		0.28
31								0.33		0.01		
Total	2.14	0.55	1.03	3.03	1.40	11.89	3.67	4.37	4.33	5.23	2.68	6.87
*Days highlighted indicate 4 or more inches of rain in a 24 hour period. Blank fields indicate no rainfall.												
* Sample dates are indicated in blue.						ND = No Data			ANNUAL RAINFALL		47.19	

TABLE #6
Shellfish Management Area 14
Pollution Event Closures
2017 – 2019

Event	Date(s)	Sample Date(s)	Opening Date	Comments
None	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

TABLE #7
Shellfish Management Area 14
MARINA INVENTORY

Marina	Total Slips	Pump-out Facility	Fuel Dock
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A